Newton, Alfred
Oct. 22, 1901.

bb. 463. (10.)

22 Octr. 1901

MAGDALENE COLLEGE,
CAMBRIDGE.

Dear Mr. Brewster

Last night I received the October "Auk" and I read with interest of your "Omnilectopian Mystery." I would ask you whether you are acquainted with the love-song (for so it may be called) of Rana esculenta the Edible Frog of Europe, for according to my recollection your description of the sounds you heard most accurately fits that very remarkable performance, which has syllabled centuries ago by the old Greek dramatist Aristophanes as brek-kek-kek, coax &c. Is it not possible that some living examples of this species may have been imported into New England as they have been into the Old country?

I shall never forget my surprise on first hearing these wonderful notes, which seemed

to be those of some unknown bird, & the thought of an amphibian never crossed my mind or my brother's. If you have access to the Zoologist for 1859 you will read there (pp. 6538-6540) of the unexpected discovery of a colony of this frog on the County of Norfolk, and again in the same journal for 1877 of a second (p. 61) – while the essentials of the story are told in the "Transactions of the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society" (ii pp. 254-257). I am not sure whether I can find a separate copy of this last, but if so I will send it to you.

I leave it to you to act on this suggestion as you think fit. I shall not write of it to anyone in your country till I have heard from you, & I have not made whatever for its publication – acting not until another season shall have given you the opportunity of testing its probability, for my shot may be very wide of the mark; but you should bear in mind that our experience in England shows these frogs to wander a good deal and that next season's orchestra may be at some considerable distance from that of last summer.

The tone of your paper is so absolutely sympathetic with that of my own feelings when I first heard these frogs that I can't refrain from writing to express it, and I remain

Yours all regards,

Yours faithfully

Alfred Newton

On better examination I found the frogs were currently shy. It was only by searching properly that I was able to see them.

Newton – Alfred
Nov. 15, 1904

15 Nov. 1904.

MAGDALENE COLLEGE,
CAMBRIDGE.

Dear Mr. Balfour

I have to thank you for your reply to my letter, but I do not know that there is more to be said on the subject, and I shall continue to await with curiosity what you may have to tell me next year after renewing your audience with the 'Kickers'. I keep the affair in my own breast, for it would not be fair upon you to blurt out any supposed explanation, when by exercising a little patience we shall know the truth. Still the more I think it over the more confident I feel; but think not that I am going to glory in the

sound of any being right — on the contrary all the credit will be yours for having so accurately described the music you heard so as to enable one to identify the musicians — for more than one there assuredly will be (on any theory) and in that way I account for the seeming movement of the performers.

By the way, the Aristophanic form of the final syllable is not "ξ," as you write, but "COAX", which seems to remember more your "ki-geuer" — not that this matters much, for I dare say you may have noticed how differently the same notes of animals sound to different ears. I must tell a remarkable instance of that a few days ago, when reading Mrs. Selous's recent book on Watching Birds, and found him stating that to him the cooing cry of our Lapwing, which he syllables "pee-wit" or "pee-wee" (the peace-cry of the Scots, displeasure of the French & Kabily of the Germans) sounds like "coo-ee" — as I think he spells it, but I have not got the book to refer to, and I may not be quite accurate.

If your "Kilter" is something new, he will deserve a generic name, and it may not be easy to find an appropriate one — Lactistes & Plerosistes are already in use.

I am still in hopes of finding for you a copy of the paper I mentioned, and meanwhile I remain

Yours very truly

Alfred Newton

Newton, Alfred.

Mich 7, 1902.

shores for a good part of the summer without breeding at all — perhaps season at least. This I know to be the case with the Turnstone, the Sanderling, & Purple Sandpiper — examples of which may be often — I have almost written always — seen here and there on our shores. The southward dispersion of many Limicolae — young of the year as I presume — begins much earlier than most people are inclined to believe. At Cambridge I hear them passing over on dark nights, early in August, if not at the end of July, & I know that the adults are then still at their breeding grounds, which they do not quit for another month or six weeks. Indeed they have to complete their moult, before they move.

Do not believe a statement in 'The Times' newspaper that the British Museum contains a specimen of the Solitary Sandpiper.

MAGDALENE COLLEGE,
CAMBRIDGE.

London
13 Jan.y 1902

Dear Mr. Brooks

If your California birds have different way of flightning, then I must be an fool for not recognizing it, which is not likely. Thank you for your letter of 22d. Dec.r. Has just been forwarded to me in London, where I am staying for a few days, and I heartily return all the good wishes for the New year therein expressed.

Pray don't hesitate to communicate to any of your friends any suggestion as to the "Kicker", for long as it does not get into print. There is far too much published already in the way of Sportsman's theory & presumption, & I hold that every right thinking man should forbear adding to the mass so far as possible. There is little credit to be gained by guessing even if the guess should prove to be right,

Yours very truly
Alfred Newton

& more at all if it turns out wrong. But it is plain that a knowledge of my conjecture may help your friends towards discovering this mystery, therefore by all means inform them accordingly. It is not for me, who never heard a note of your Yellow Rail, to offer an opinion as to the possibility of the noise being due to that bird, though what you say as to its not breeding in New England seems a strong fact against Mr. Ames's explanation. All I can vouch for is that you have most accurately described the "love song" of the Edible Frog – if you have a bird which mimics it, without having ever heard it, so much the greater wonder!

I believe I did read one or more articles on the migration of Waterbirds along the California coast, but I have no distinct recollection of the statements advanced; & not having books at hand just now I cannot turn the papers up. It is however beyond all doubt that on our coasts, & I think I may say generally those of Western Europe, the young – certainly those of the first brood in species which have more than one – the Lapwing, Snipe & Dunlin among others – migrate southwardly before the adults. I would venture to ask whether, since the contrary is alleged to be observed on your West coast, the adults appearing before the young are birds which have bred ~~south~~ north that season – for we know that a good many Limicolæ appear to be barren, & to frequent our

Newton – Alfred
Mch 7. 1902.

7 March 1902.

MAGDALENE COLLEGE,
CAMBRIDGE.

Dear Mr. Brewster,

Two nights ago a friend of mine told me that, staying at Montreal, last summer or the summer before, frogs were served at table in the hotel where he was lodging. They were regarded as great delicacies, and he ate them, finding them just as tender and indistinct as those which he had often eaten in France; but was rather surprised to meet with them there, believing that it was only in that country that they were used as food. Accordingly he enquired as to where they were obtained, and was told that having been introduced by French Canadians, they flourished in the neighbourhood. Hearing this he did not hesitate, though I plied him with questions, without however betraying the

the reason of my curiosity. My friend, a M.D. of the University can hardly be called a zoologist though he has ~~some~~ not a little knowledge of zoology — enough indeed to know that the Edible Frog of Europe is not indigenous to America, and his first idea was that the animals served to the people at the hotel had been imported already cooked (or half-cooked) & preserved in tins — or, as I believe you term it, "canned"; but the result of his enquiries showed that this notion was mistaken. Had he been a zoologist, he would no doubt have ascertained exactly whence they were procured.

Unfortunately I have no correspondent in or near Montreal, but possibly you may be able to act on this hint, and make out something more; for, setting aside "the Kicker" it could be interesting to know if Rana esculenta has been naturalized in any part of America, and the circumstances attending its "acclimatization".

I remain,
Yours very truly
Alfred Newton

Newton, Alfred
Apr 2, 1902.

2 April
1902

MAGDALENE COLLEGE,
CAMBRIDGE.

Dear Mr. Brewster,

Returning yesterday from a short absence I found your letter of the 20th March. I had not known that your Bull-Frog was edible, much less regarded as a delicacy. If its range extends to Canada, it may well have been the species eaten by my friend at Montreal, and not as he thought the R. esculenta imported from France. He certainly gave me to understand, if he did not expressly say, that the Frogs he ate were caught in the

neighbourhood, and consult "Cassell".

I myself have, out of curiosity, eaten Frogs in Paris, and very little satisfaction I got out of them; for, though tender, they seem to me absolutely flavourless. Our ordinary Frog (R. temporaria) is said to have a very unpleasant flavour, but I know not any one who has made trial of it.

I await with much curiosity the result of your acquaintance with "The Kicker"; but if my suggestion be correct there will be no end in listening for it just yet, as he will not be in full song till late in May. I remain

Yours very truly Alfred Newton.

Newton – Alfred
July 8, 1902.

8 July 1902

MAGDALENE COLLEGE.
CAMBRIDGE.

Dear Mr. Brewster

I am much disappointed to learn that the "Rider" has failed to put in an appearance this year, but I think this fact is rather in favour of my suggestion that he was an Edible Frog – and that your New England winter has been too severe for him – in which case you will not hear him again – though from my experience of Rana esculenta in this country it certainly shifts its place from year to year.

We have had a visit, as perhaps you know, from Mr. Faxon, and as he was with you when you heard the mysterious croaks last year I did not hesitate to discuss the

subject with him. He is not inclined to accept my explanation, but as I believe he is now come to the continent he ought to have opportunities of hearing Rana Cœrulea & then will be better able to judge. We were all charmed with him, and I hope he enjoyed his stay here, but he was decidedly unfortunate in the weather, for all the time he had a succession of cold rains which interfered with his proceedings, and especially hindered him from going to hear the Grasshopper Warbler and subsequently (in Norfolk) the Bearded Titmouse. I hope he will find time to run down here once more when he returns to England in his dry home, though it will be too late for him to accomplish either of those objects.

Your "Rickers", if a bird (& a Rail especially) must be a native, & therefore certainly ought to be shot in other places. I am quite indifferent as to what he may prove to be, but hoping that he will in time be rediscovered and determined

I remain with all kind regards

Yours very truly

Alfred Newton

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GREAT BRITAIN & IRELAND

THIS SIDE FOR THE ADDRESS

OCT 18 1902

CAMBRIDGE OCT 10 02 3

William Brewster, Esq.

Cambridge, Mass.

United States of America

Newton — Alfred

Oct 10, 1902.

1

Please to accept my thanks for your elaborate paper on the Birds of the Cape Region of Lower California just received.

Alfred Newton

Magdalen College,
Cambridge.
10 Oct. 1902.

Newton – Alfred
May 25, 1906.

25 May 1906.

[illegible]

My dear Sir,

Some very good person other, from whom I prefer, I incline to suppose, may be you, has sent me three photographs of the statue of Adam Smith and one of Pitt & Fox – all presumably in the Museum of Harvard. The last photograph I recognize as being that of one of the two Fox's which so unexpectedly disappeared many years ago in the Museum of the R. Coll. of Surgeons in London. It was brought by the late Mr. Champley of Scarborough, and passing with his other specimens into the hands of "Rotander Ward" has with them been lost. I am delighted to think that it has at last fell in a safe resting place. Most I know nothing about the

Mr. Brewster, Esq.
Cambridge, Mass.

for it, which possibly her mother would never be at the trouble to mention – indeed I am not certain that they may not be mentioned once.

If you be not the kind donor of these photographs perhaps you may know or be able to guess who he is, and in any case any best thanks are due to him, for I remain, My dear Sir,

Yours most truly

Alfred Newton

skeleton, and should much like to know particulars.

Some years after I got the first "memory" from Frank Sidgwick in 1863, of Swedenborg's report, one or two more were obtained — and one at least of them was held for me by the Bishop of Newfoundland who wrote to me of it accordingly. Unfortunately a day or two before his letter reached England Sidgwick died for Spitzbergen and died not get it till the following autumn. I then wrote at once to the Bishop, but he, not having heard from me for so many months, came to the conclusion that I did not want it — and so sent it (as I have understood) to the late Prof. Agassiz.

I should like very much to know whether there is any truth in this story — for I did not get it direct from the Bishop, but in some round about way that at this moment I do not remember. If the story be true I imagine that the leaders of the procession in one of the photographs must be the capsules of which it is told — the others likely enough being built up of the bones collected by Prof. Nielson and Rev. Lucas.

Sir, I not more apologising that I should have troubled you, for I hope within a very short time to come to work bearing on "The Story of the Gaspe" which I should like to talk before I die — having [illegible] a vast accumulation of [illegible]

Newton – Alfred
June 29. 1906

never entering the dry water very effectually
yet, and I venture the prophecy that
a few years hence Rana esculenta
will be unquestionably indigenous in
some ponds out very far from where
you found it. I do this on the strength
of my own experience in this country.
Somewhere between 1850 & 1855 my
brother & I found a colony of frogs of this
species in a very small pond. Here we lived
some few years after and then disappeared –
then some 25 years later I came
across another colony in a pond some 8 or
10 miles off – and that pond I understand
has since been drained & filled!

Yours very truly
Alfred Newton

Wm. Brewster, Esq.

29 June 1906.

My dear Sir,

I have to thank you for two letters – of the 10th & 18th respectively – and only delayed thanking you for the first of them because you said that you would be from home; but acting on your hint I at once wrote to Mr. Hanshaw.

I had not heard of Mr. Thayer's buying the stuffed Great Auk, and five of its eggs, and this information enables me to account for some of the rarer specimens of the latter which belonged to the late Mr. Champley, and were placed with "Rowland Ward, Limited" to be sold.

I dare say I shall be in town

Columbia Orchard
Oregon

Whether the remaining two are genuine, but as to the former owner of the mummies this I cannot even guess. Dealers take a delight in making a mystery of their sort of thing, for they think thereby to keep up prices.

I had not been aware of Mr. Sam=:bergen's visit to Funk Island, but if any account of it has been published I should like to know where it is to be seen. Certainly Mr. Lucas gave me the impression that he had left nothing for anybody else to find, but then one comes to consider the millions (I believe I am not exaggerating) of Penguins that must have lived and died on that island, the nightly of bones may not even now be exhausted.

I hope I may get some particulars from Mr. Hensher of the mummy or mummies sent to Louis Agassiz. I asked Alexander Agassiz about them at least once, but his sympathies don't lie in that direction, & as I could not get him to interest himself in the matter I suppose he forgot all about it when he went back.

I am more than ever of opinion that I should gain "Omithological Mystery" for you, though you cannot

17 August 1906.

My dear Sir,

I have to thank you for your most friendly letter of the 31st of July, which reached just a week ago, and a few days after there arrived the "little" book which it announced. For this last acceptable and unexpected gift I am indeed obliged, though I know not to make return except by attempting to fulfil your desire that I should express my opinion by frank criticism of it. This honour is for many reasons for I should have to read it through and carefully, for which I have not at present sufficient time. At seriously written quarter of 600 odd pages is not to be gone through in a hurry – and I have not tried to do more than glance at it, or dip into it, the "Annotated list" from page 85 onwards. The first or introductory part I have read in a fashion, and that with

of Sparrows, and I suspect that after a few generations it will be the same with yours. Still I am always glad to think that I did my best to caution my American correspondents, from Baird downwards, against the introduction of that "undesirable alien". I felt sure that he would become a nuisance, and especially that the excuse for introducing him (the destruction of the "Bacalaureus worm") was idle. But just at that time there was a wave of "Acclimatization" passing over the world which it was impossible for any man to resist. Black Rats were the unchecked offspring of people like Frank Buckland & a few others had no effect in this country – chiefly I think because the fauna of Europe, and of Great Britain in particular, is more akin to that of most countries. They don't bear down their prey in the Indian fashion – it is the latter result of long considering the problem of the geographical distribution of animals – and perhaps of plants. But again I am wandering from my subject, and writing of other things than your book.

I am much pleased with what you say of Beddard, only I know you feel for him (& Tomes) for not doing more in regard to the birds of the Sandwich Islands. It always astonishes me that their varying and peculiarity did not excite more interest. Of course

considerable interest, though my ignorance of the topography of the district "Region" internally prevents me from appreciating the details. I much regret that my recollection of Cambridge, where I was just about this time 69 years ago, is very indistinct. I went over for the day from Boston, alone, and I could find no one to show me about or tell me anything — in fact the place seemed deserted, and I must confess I returned somewhat disappointed — of course I knew that it was in the vacation, and also that Agassiz (the father) whom I should like to have met was away — The result was that there was little or nothing to remember. But to return to your book — It is plain that you must have had great pleasure in recalling and recording your early recollections of places where in congenial companionship you must have had often enjoyed the observation and study of so many interesting birds — places the character of which has since undergone such a change (or rather logically speaking) for the worse — So all that I can chiefly say in congratulating either you — for first that same change has been brought in many parts of Old England, and even parts of this country which have not been actually touched by man are affected by what has been done in their immediate neighbourhood. Thus the garden of this College looks exactly as it did seven years ago, when I first knew it — but I am sure that we have not in it one tenth of the number of birds that used to frequent it. The reason is plain — We shoot them on the very outskirts of the town — what was then open fields are now covered (some orders) with houses — every other house has its Cat, and our garden is their favorite playground! No wonder then that we have no longer Redstarts, White-throats or Red-Wings — Wrens are occasional Nightingales — Lovely our Warblers — even a Titmouse is a rarity. Now I see that you attribute the disappearance of so many of your birds to the House-Sparrow — Well, he does never have any particular friend of mine, but I strongly suspect he is not guilty of all the disappearances which he is charged, and I am quite sure that a couple or so of Cats will do more to clear a garden of birds than Sparrows by the score or the hundred. Even small birds remove them least fear or suspicion

meanwhile. I venture to predict that it will turn up again written for, and that you will be seen an able possessor or appreciator.

By this time you will have learned courage of my tediousness and do I remain ever your most obliged

Yours sincerely

Alfred Russel Wallace

E. P. Brewster, Esq.

Writers Pettell and Tennant could have been expected to [illegible] forgotten poets that would hardly contribute to enjoyment of the spirit — but each of them must have had opportunities of seeing & possessing books that they could not point a reason to — simply because they had not been described — I found Pettell's 'Manual' a very useful book in my young days — it may contain many platitudes, but it tells one many things that one wanted to know, and the platitudes are not to be compared with those of some more recent English authors.

But now to sum up — "frankly" as you ask me. I do not think that your book attains the merits of White's 'Selborne'; but I like it very much. Its style is careful though simple: it is permeated by the right spirit of a naturalist, and therefore its tone is elevated — & I may add elevating — and I know no attempt at this kind of prose writing which, to me at least, is so refreshing in contrast with the modern "nature books", because it is so unnatural. The use of some of the commonest local names, which profit on an Old English car. — "Old Squeaver" for airplane & "Thrasher" are perhaps unavoidable, but is much to be regretted. I would

names are very good things in their way, and I often use them myself; but they require discretion in using lest they be stumbling blocks to the uninitiated and the stranger to whom they sound at first grotesque and after a while abominable — Some local names there are of common sense and unobjectionable. I may enclosing more of the "pet ugly" of your book than it seems in all respects excellent — and it promises that for two plain respectable lady-cousins — an admirable Sudan.

With this I cannot conclude my Monday only I cannot leave the interest once more asking you to accept my most hearty thanks for this handsome gift.

Miss Sainthorpe has kindly sent me photographs of their skeletons of Aldo [illegible] which he has just together from deserted burrows found in South Island — but he is unlikely at the absence of the 1st & 2nd vols from Sale. I have sent him the dates which I hope may enable him to find them among his collections, for they may take to them and overlook them. Mr. Henshaw too has been so good as to send me within the last few days a photograph of the memory of that spring chick I saw that to spend still exists in the Museum of Comparative Zoology. I do hope that before long I may be able to set the crude drawing I made in attempt to take the story of this unlucky bird, and show that I may have to finish it.

As to the "Kicker" quite new observations in all these years — that is exactly my own experience with Rare occurrence in this country. I have not the dates at this moment before me — but it cannot have been 25 years between my discovery and rediscovery of it in Norfolk — one case only, so far as is known, from as bright example of it in the

14 Sept.r 1906.

Manchester Museum
Owens College

My dear Sir,

I should have thanked you before this for your letter of 27 August, which I found awaiting my return from a short absence some ten days since, but I have had my time so completely occupied that I have been quite unable to send you back the answer as it deserved.

I am very glad that what I wrote gave you any pleasure, for I was surprised to say the least and sorry that I felt after reading acquaintance with your book, and the opinion I expressed is one that I am not likely to change. I quite agree with you as to the "inadequacy of style" with which so many considerations of the day are content — I should only remark that it is not confined to those

Tristan Brooke, Esq.

that looking — though I think everybody admits that it cannot have been taken thither by human agency.

I am hoping to have some of the rarest collection of "Penguin" bones at Funk Island — with respect to which I have been in communication with Mr. Henderson of Aberd. — though I suppose nothing short of confirmation will have weight of it. I have been trying the bones and have the old-standing disease very quite apparent in the island — but I fear it can't be traced further back than Capt. Cartier's survey & chart — but I can still believe it was not inapplicable in those days — for I have often had impression of the stench arising from a Stranger Mass of sea-fowl — yet a stalio gratissima merces is always most grateful to me.

With kind regards, I remain

Yours very truly

Alfred Newton

of your country – Our people are very like as
bad; and the Germans are even worse –
less to Frenchmen, they seem to have escaped
from writing.

On the Shenandoah question I side with
again Mr Lange; but I cannot help thinking
that Tom would have been wonder of the profession.
So regard to the case of Lord Dunmore – Much
cannot depend on the personal taste of
the writer – Where they are applicable
I see no objection to them – they serve,
I think it is advantage to use them –
but when they signify nothing or
suggest something absurd I consider
them abominable – It was "Old Squire",
I think, applied to some as beautiful
bird as the Long-tailed Duck, that
especially aroused my indignation –
I don't take exception to "Bob White"

for Origin of Species – though I don't see any
reason in Virginia Partridge or Quail –
because we have chickens from the
birds' calls – I doubt its applicability –
but when it is applied in a manner very
to other species, which I understand the
not contain "Bob White", as it seems
likely to be, I [redacted] consider it a
mistake.

The Edible Frog question cannot be
left to time to settle – and I doubt
not it will some day be cleared up. Perhaps
may perhaps not be correct that it was
in the neighborhood of Philadelphia (Cambridge)
that the species was first recognized in
England. That was 60 years ago, and
the doubt then which it inhabited
having been long left dominant, but
has been heard of it since in that quarter – Tom has
long light been shown as to Tom, when,
or by whom it was introduced the

MAGDALENE COLLEGE,
CAMBRIDGE.

19 October
1906.

My dear Sir,

I have to beg your acceptance of a copy of my friend Mr. Southwell's edition of Lubbock's "Fauna of Norfolk" which I have desired Mr. Porter, the publisher of "Ibis" to send you by the next parcel. The book is not a new one, but it is very likely one that has not fallen in your way, and I think it may interest you, for it has a pronounced old world flavour which, judging from your own charming work that you lately sent me, will endear I am sure to commend it to you.

With it there also goes a copy of my own account of the discovery or rediscovery

1 *Rana esculenta*, as printed in the 'Transactions of the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society' at this Society tells you is rare, owing to the destruction by fire of the "stock" of the other volumes. Not separate copies were struck off, and I consider myself very fortunate in having found these pages.

Hoping these should you care regard this as some return for your recent volume gift — all the more welcome because so unexpected — I remain, enter first volume

Yours very faithfully

Alfred Newton

Wm. Brewster, Esq.

14 December
1906.

MAGDALENE COLLEGE.
CAMBRIDGE.

My dear Sir,

I am very glad I was right in thinking that you would like the "Lubbock" I had sent to you. I thought there might be some reasonable cause for the delay in your acknowledging its receipt, though I would not refrain from fearing that it might have gone astray in the post.

In what you say as to "Kicker" being most amiable at night, and during rain – that is just what I understand the Edible Frog to be in France – but it sings also in warm sunny weather – though fairly silent, as I have been told, on dull chilly days, such as that on which my

good friend Mr. Scattergood paid his
visit to Stow-Bedon. I myself have
never been by night to any locality frequented
by this species — but it is a well-known
fact that before the French Revolution one
of the charges brought against the Seigneurs
was that, when they visited their country seats,
they compelled the peasants to pass the
night in flogging the ponds to keep the
frogs quiet, and so cut to disturb
the sleep of their lordly neighbours!
There is therefore no such discrepancy
as you infer between my two
statements. You don't make sufficient
allowance for our variable climate
— which perhaps was after all one of the
reasons which prompted your Croydon
ancestor, among others, to change
their name. It frequently happens to us
in May or June, after some days which
induce us to believe that 'summer is
a-coming in', to have a day or two that
would suit one of the previous November.

Write your evidence hanging for the
Old Country. Why do you not come and
see us? Perhaps you have been, but if
so you did not show yourself to me
here, so that counts for nothing, and
letting you know I may be a visit soon.

With all kind regards

Yours very truly

Alfred Newton

Wm. Brewster Esq.